Recognition of service and authorship: struggles in and around the knowledge economy; contribution to the Conference Participation between Markets and Organizational Democracy

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Ursula Holtgrewe[1]: **Recognition of Service and Authorship: Struggles in and around the Knowledge Economy**

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The paper argues that a perspective on recognition and intersubjectivity contributes to the understanding of the issues, meanings and values which are addressed and struggled over in labour and social conflicts – especially in new(ish), knowledge-intensive fields of work. It draws together findings from diverse projects in progress[2] in a perhaps slightly speculative way.

I use the term knowledge economy rather than talking about the Internet economy because I am not sure that there is such a thing. The Internet extends the circulation of information and communication both in terms of space and time and also the distribution of (immaterial) goods and services. Economies around it tend to be specifically conflictual due to the properties of information and knowledge. These are goods from which users may not easily be excluded. This is why there are struggles around the degree to which information and infrastructure are to be commodified or de-commodified, around the question how far property rights may extend, around the limitations of market logics as opposed to the logics of public goods, use-value and social exchange (Lessig 2000).

Looking at relations of recognition allows us to address the dynamics of work-related identities and subjective involvements in working practices, in labour and social struggles in order to explore the possibilities of co-operation and organisation. While producers' pride has been a traditional motive of labour struggles, it is by no means linked to traditional craft communities or industrial districts exclusively. Through and around the Internet, communities and practices of co-operation, such as open source software development, have emerged which take technological innovation beyond paid work and claim a democratisation of technology itself. Here, ideas of mutuality and non-commercial exchange, but also respect for creativity are vivid, and reputation and recognition become elaborate forms of co-ordination.

However, it is not just highly skilled or professional communities for whom symbolic interests such as recognition of creativity, authorship and the social capital invested in co-operation become an issue. Research in telephone call centres suggests that at the lower end of knowledge work, the norms and intrinsic characteristics of customer orientation and communication work may develop a similar dynamic. They shape work-related identities and

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2 The paper is based on is based on work the author is doing with Stephan Voswinkel and Gabriele Wagner on recognition at work (cg. Holtgrewe/Voswinkel/Wagner eds. 2000) on an exploratory literature study of open source software (Holtgrewe 2001) and on a study on call centres in Germany which is funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft („Call centres in between neo-taylorism and customer orientation"). Preparatory research for that project was done with Lars Gundtoft; presently the project team consists of Sandra Arzbächer, Christian Kerst, Julia Althoff, Hanns-Georg Brose and the author. Thanks are due to all these colleagues and our anonymous interviewees as well as to Carsten Dose, Johanna Hofbauer, Hannes Oberlindober, Peter Sanders and Karen Shire who all have contributed ideas and advice. Faults and imprecisions are the author's responsibility.

claims to recognition and expertise in ways resistant to the management rhetoric of empowerment.

I am going to explore two issues around which relations of recognition in knowledge-intensive economies may be grouped: The recognition of *service* and the recognition of *authorship*. Service is tied to the "game between people" (Bell 1973) and the fulfilment of expectations, the production of normality. Authorship addresses distinction, the individual, special or even extraordinary performance and/or production. Yet this is not merely a distinction between higher and lower-skilled work. We are going to discover that these two dimensions of recognition interpenetrate in possibly surprising ways. These instances suggest that both subjects' multiple experiences and practices of culture, education and politics and the changing contents and demands of their work do not necessarily erode subjective and collective claims to autonomy and participation, but may also inspire struggles for recognition and democratisation in and beyond work.

1. Recognition at work

When studying work experiences and labour relations one inevitably comes across workers' subtle notions of respect and disrespect which do not simply translate into material or political interests. Such findings point to the concept of recognition which is able to link such empirical evidence to social theory. Recognition is understood here in the sense of Honneth (1994; 1997) as a basic medium of social integration and of the constitution of subjectivity (cf. Holtgrewe et al. 2000; Holtgrewe 2001). It places intersubjectivity at the very beginning of the development of subjectivity. Humans constitute their identities in an intersubjective way, through recognising one another, both seeing oneself through others' eyes and in turn taking the role of the other, anticipating others' reaction and acting upon these anticipations (Mead 1934/1972). These processes are both cognitive and evaluative. According to Mead, they follow an evolutionary logic: Individuals learn to internalise wider and wider perspectives and from there come to integrate a "generalised other", meaning society as a whole.

However, recognition is not just about conformity to others' or society's expectations. On the one hand, it involves subjects and their identities in the reproduction of social norms and values. On the other, it is inherently conflictual and dynamic (Honneth 1994: 30ff. with reference to Hegel). Since individuals interact in multiple and diverse relationships and continuously discover new dimensions of their individuality (Mead's creative and dynamic I), they potentially find themselves restricted and misrecognised by existing norms and social expectations: Thus they may come to *claim* recognition for their own identities. Such claims to recognition have a critical element of contrafactual anticipation and social change: a community is anticipated and through struggles for recognition may eventually be built up which will honour these claims.

Through this tension between conformity and creativity, existing relations of recognition carry misrecognition with them. Self-respect is not simply generated by being recognised by others for conforming to their expectations. It often even requires a certain amount of non-conformism – for which in turn recognition is sought and claimed.[3] Thus, in relations of recognition the dimensions of normality and distinction, equality and difference are interrelated (Mead 1934/1972; Todorov 1996: 98).

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[3] Yet non-conformism and distinction are based on notions of normality: If a person is going to stick out and be recognised for being special, she must have established that she is perfectly competent to act in the normal manner – that it is choice and not inability which leads her to act in a different way (Goffman 1990; Voswinkel/ Lücking 1996).

The sphere of work in modern societies is central for experiences of agency and solidarity. Yet a look at the real world of work in modern societies makes it clear that recognition of and in work, central as it is to modern subjects, is only available through specific misrecognitions. Neither work organisations nor interactions going on within them are primarily concerned with the self-realisation of the organisation's members. Instead, organisations pursue purposes of their own and induce members to co-operate by specific rewards. In return for getting paid, members open up "zones of indifference" (Barnard 1938), i. e. a sphere of action in which they (need to) accept authority and infringements of their autonomy and their needs and wishes.

On the other hand, work offers recognition as well: of competence, accountability, solidarity and being needed. Thus, work organisations institutionalise relations of both recognition and misrecognition. Organisational divisions of labour, labour contracts, relations of control and co-ordination all recognise workers' agency and discretion in order both to restrict and use it. Pay and appraisal systems, skill formation, routines of performance evaluation and control thus institutionalise relations of recognition. On the level of work, of course, recognition is communicated through everyday interactions with co-workers, superiors and subordinates and also customers. Not just praise and blame, but also asking for advice and giving help, modifying and resisting organisational standards of performance and behaviour are ways in which relations of recognition are played out on the shop floor, with or against its organisational institutionalisations.

Thus, since misrecognitions experienced at work carry recognition with them as well and vice versa, subjects cannot *really* remain indifferent to the demands of their work roles. They draw upon these organisational mechanisms of recognition to form and transform work-related identities, and it is only through these subjective actualisations that such mechanisms can be said to work. And in being addressed by the mechanisms of recognition and relating to them, subjects of course do not just reproduce and/or possibly transform their own identities but also the system of valuation they are based on. This is how conformism is re/produced through subjective involvements and investments in 'the way things are'.[4]

However, considering the multiple dimensions and inherent tensions of recognition, recognition does not wholly translate into just another subjugation-generating mechanism operated by its addressees (though it often is that as well). Relations of recognition at work are diversified through the different and often disparate claims that work organisation, co-workers, customers and the labour process make upon workers. Beyond the sphere of work, subjects are active in diverse social spheres with contradictory expectations and also diverse articulations of the dimensions of recognition. They experience diverse standards, interactions and relationships and need to make sense of that very diversity. In terms of recognition as well, "formation of the self of necessity exceeds what organisations require from their 'subjective factor'" and therefore cannot simply be subsumed under organisational demands (Flecker/Hofbauer 1998: 113). Indeed, it is subjects' diverse experiences and their ability to draw upon diverse relations of recognition that enables them to pursue struggles for recognition.

2. Recognition of creativity

While recognition at work has traditionally been – and still is – chiefly concerned with the fulfilment of expectations, there are other social spheres in which distinction and creativity form the basis of recognition. Here, innovation, surprise, and the extraordinary are prized,

4 Influencing these mechanisms of recognition and subjective involvement is what the managerial debates about commitment and "organisational citizenship" are about.

and recognition then comes in the shape of reputation.[5] In Fordist modernity these spheres have been differentiated from the normality of everyday work. Culture, the arts, the media, sports come to mind, but also science and technology have their great inventors, charismatic leaders or projects (Blutner/Holtgrewe/Wagner 1999). Here, the market economy is complemented by economic rationalities which may be described as gift or potlatch economies in addition to the economies of exchange and profit. In such economies, gifts are given and possibly wasted in exchange for reputation.

These spheres have their institutions, communities and specialists. There are creators, which "produce" innovation, mediators such as critics, media or patent offices which evaluate and translate the results, and audiences both within and outside the community who appreciate them – in of course intricate networks, in which production, translation and reception can only be separated analytically. Although the social spheres of creativity have their industries, workplaces and people making a living, they suggest and stage different rationalities of action: expressivity, charisma, genius.[6] In contrast, there is the work and commitment of amateurs or beginners who are working for free in order to get access to the industry (Haak/Schmid 1999; Randle/Culkin 2000), or subsidising their activities and projects by other incomes. This does not just apply to cultural production but also f. i. to university science, where the multiplicity of jobs, stipends, grants etc. mirrors that what one does only loosely corresponds with what one is paid for.

Not surprisingly, it has frequently been suggested that Internet economies in which an increasing share of production is the production of information and knowledge-intensive goods, of "content", are becoming gift or attention economies (Goldhaber 1997; Barbrook 1998; Raymond 1998). Here, contributions are supposed to be innovative and surprising, investments therefore highly risky, and material rewards, even though they may be considerable, are uncertain and are complemented by rewards in reputation. This means, recognition is awarded individually for the distinguished contribution and the extraordinary feat.

The division of the sphere of work and separate spheres in which creativity is recognised, is of course an analytical one. Both sociology and social movements have frequently discovered and rediscovered the role of the "creativity of action" (Joas 1996; cf. Emirbayer/Mische 1998) in everyday life. At the same times, sociologists of work, of technology and of gender relations have emphasised the creative, problem-solving action in highly routinised work and housework. Especially when such routines are changed through technology, the application of technology requires a creative re-building of the contexts of action (Suchman 1987; Rammert 1997) which frequently are underestimated and misrecognised (Suchman 1994; Holtgrewe 1997). In a different field, youth subcultures and their researchers transform everyday street expressivity into cultural and social change (Hebdige 1979). "New" social movements aim at transforming norms and values by anticipating them practically and claiming recognition for their practices, communities and projects (Honneth 1994). The diverse discoveries of creativity and of the potentials of the "subjective factor" thus have been tied to far-reaching claims to participation and democratisation. Both social movements and social scientists demand further spaces for creative action. Creativity is thus not just discovered but is expected to feed processes of social transformation and innovation. The point is not just to increase the potential for innovation but to render innovation more democratic itself.

This association of creativity and social transformation has dissolved in the 1990s – although or, possibly, because creativity as a norm has indeed diffused through society. The demarcations between the sphere of the everyday and of creativity have become blurred. This

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5 For reputation entering into the sphere of work and its regulation see Voswinkel 1999.

6 Frequently these gifts are rewarded quite extravagantly: The stars' fees are beyond any calculation of the worth of a performance – but even they are not supposed to be "only in it for the money" (Frank Zappa).

has happened especially through the transformations of work organisations which are decentralising and opening themselves to the market. In the interest of competitiveness and innovativity they extend discretion and responsibility to the rank and file. It is no longer just researchers, developers, creative professionals or managers who are required to be creative. Defining and rationalising one's own work, mobilising and combining resources, creating and using opportunities in the interest of the organisation has frequently become a regular work task of normal, formerly operative employees (Darrah 1996; Moldaschl 1998; Moldaschl/Sauer 2000; Holtgrewe 2000 and many more). Even creating a continuous career is becoming an achievement or indeed, a performance of tying jobs, projects and contacts together (Arthur/Rousseau 1996; Nardi et al. 2000).

Culturally, with the diffusion of (demands for) creativity, the meaning of creativity has changed. In "knowledge societies" it is understood as entrepreneurial creativity symbolised in the "new economy". This suggests less a transformative process into open spaces of social possibility than a strategic calculation of market success. The change of institutions and evaluations (except towards deregulation) has become less of an issue than the serving of solvent expectations. Surprises and innovations are limited to the swift discovery of new markets. This suggests that not just economic but also social and cultural innovations tend to be short-circuited with the market – which is a highly specific and limited way of evaluating creativity. Accordingly, social times and spaces my erode in which alternative, social and cultural innovations may be tried out or even alternatives to the market may be developed.

However, I am arguing that this pessimistic view is limited. It makes sense to sharpen our attention to the many contexts, orientations, communities in and through which people go on acting in a creative way and struggle for recognition of that creativity – instead of deploring the supposedly all-embracing and homogenising power of markets.

3. Recognition of service and of authorship

I am thus suggesting (recognition of) *service* and *authorship* as ideal types of recognition, which in knowledge societies represent recognition for normality and competence on the one hand, for originality and distinction on the other.

3.1 Multiple relations of recognition in service work

Service relates chiefly to service work which contains both personal services and production-related services. Here, the multiplicity of relations of recognition is especially crucial since interactions are an integral part of work itself. For this, service work that is performed "on the frontline" (Frenkel et al. 1999), in direct interaction with customers is exemplary. Standardisation of service work is limited since an organisation can only influence demands from the outside to a limited extent. Yet exercising these attempts at influence and getting the customer to co-operate with organisational routines is part of service work as well. Intersubjectivity is thus immediately at stake but relations of recognition multiply between workers, organisations and customers.

Considerable parts of service work in general (Offe 1984) are concerned with producing and maintaining normality. Therefore, relations of recognition take a particular and paradoxical shape Service workers are appreciated for guaranteeing an organisation's reliable and predictable performance consistent with customers' expectations. The organisation needs to maintain a reputation for being both competent and obliging. These ambiguities come together in the demands of frontline work and position frontline workers in a paradoxical way: To satisfy the customer they need to present themselves as willing servants and competent actors (and to balance both), to anticipate customers' needs and wants and respect their autonomy. To act on behalf of the organisation, they are to perform as obedient agents and proactive entrepreneurs. Since these relations of recognition operate between persons,

frontline workers need to present themselves as competent, accountable and "unflappable" (Giddens 1990, p. 85) individuals in order to generate trust – and then to 'step back' and make their customers transfer that recognition and trust to the organisation. This entails limits on the recognition available for personal authenticity, particularity and uniqueness:

> "There is a trade-off between the gain in personalization when one is treated as an individual and the loss in predictability as the guidance provided by role expectations dissolves" (Solomon et al. 1985: 107).

There is, however, a continuum of types of work in between standardised and (quasi)-professional services (Gutek 1995). Yet there is not a simple line to be drawn. Indeed the recognition of relations of autonomy and dependency, of normality and special treatment is struggled over between organisations, customers and employees. Norms of "helping people" which translate into recognising their neediness and restoring autonomy are not restricted to personal services and care, but they are also effective in frontline work. Here, they conflict with organisational attempts to create standardised encounters and increase efficiency – even though norms and expectations of helpfulness may be a necessary prerequisite for co-operation in this standardisation.

3.2 Meeting and challenging expectations: Recognition of authorship

The recognition of authorship, on the contrary, prizes originality, even though of course there are large fields of fairly routinised production-line content production. I am using the term in a loose sense to include collective production such as media production and technological invention as well. Authorship chiefly values uniqueness of the product. While authors do well to anticipate the expectations of their audiences they do just as well to fulfil them in an unanticipated way. Being an author is part of these expectations. Even if production is collective as in film, television or science, the institutions which evaluate it position individuals as authors and/or collaborators because reputation requires persons to be attached to. Secondary reputation of collaborators, supporting staff etc. may in turn be based on being associated with a famous author.

However, on the side of the gift or reputation economy not any personal extravagance will be rewarded. Performances will be evaluated against existing standards of excellence, possibly by recognised authorities. Yet in culture and social life, artistic avantgardes and social movements question exactly these criteria and institutions of evaluation – and struggle for the recognition of their products, values and communities and for the transformation of existing or establishment of new institutions. They frequently even tend to challenge the concept of authorship – although it is not uncommon for them to be grouped around certain founders, spokespersons or leaders. Reputation economies thus frequently come under challenges themselves, when the leading individuals are ascribed a craving for fame only. They require a balance between meeting and challenging standards and/or authorities. Heading for success in a too transparent way will bring about reputation as an opportunist only, while pure idiosyncrasy may label one as a nut.

The personalisation of creative production is two-sided. The institutions of authorship such as copyright and patent laws, and the expectations of relevant audiences require, address and position creative persons, inventors or authors in order to give reputation to them – while the economic exploitation of intellectual property rights is pursued by culture industries (cf. Rose 1995; Bettig 1996; Coombe 1998). Yet intellectual property is not limited to the economic side. European copyright laws for instance contain a "moral" copyright which addresses the integrity of the work as a personality right of the author (*Urheberpersönlichkeitsrecht*). This right cannot be sold even if the rights of distribution and circulation are. Thus, market and reputation economies are interlaced, institutionalising authors, owners (Rose 1995), industries, evaluation agencies (Groys 1997) and audiences.

Yet authors in general are supposed to resist the temptations of personal fame up to a point. A certain modesty and the suggestion that their production/performance is but a small contribution to the larger good of science, art etc. is certainly in order. The institutions and routines of evaluation such as literary criticism, academic debate etc. require precautions against judgements being taken to personally as well. They will at some point need to make sure – more or less ritualistically – that evaluations are addressed to the product, not the authors in order to limit damages to authors' subjective and narcissistic investments in their work.

4. Transforming service and authorship: call centre work and open-source/free software development

4.1 Service quality in call centre work

Telephone call centres in the last few years have become exemplary of standardised service work. In this form of work and organisation, standardisation of products and interactions is supported by information and communication technology while talking on the phone introduces a degree of flexibility and intersubjectivity into organisations' interactions with customers. Standardised frontline work is still expected to satisfy customers and recognise their needs and wishes.

To balance these contradictory demands, organisations rely on a particular workforce. Call centre agents across Europe are young, roughly two thirds are women and part time work is frequent (Belt et al. 1998). In Germany, half to two thirds are working part-time. Education here is fairly high with more than a third having completed higher secondary education (*Abitur*) or even university degrees, and especially students and skilled women returning to work are an attractive, "not-unskilled" part-time workforce (Gundtoft/Holtgrewe 2000; Arzbächer/Holtgrewe/Kerst 2000). Call centres thus draw on particular subjective dispositions to develop a certain employee *habitus* in between servility and professionalism through selection, training and control for which these employee groups seem suitable.

In interactions with customers, a considerable amount of the work performed is indeed about recognition. Mutual recognition as competent, trustworthy and pleasant interaction partners is established between workers and customers – or not. These negotiations happen while call centre agents' position in the organisation and often the actual layout of their workplaces tends to undermine this positioning of subjectivity.

Yet the organisationally inculcated norms of both competence and customer orientation have a way of striking back: Workers insist on following a customer's problem through in spite of organisational attempts to keep calls short (Korczynski et al. 2000) and may even mobilise customers to complain about decreasing service standards (Knights/McCabe 1998). If they are instructed to act naturally and in a personal style, they resist attempts to prescribe their style of interaction (Taylor 1998: 95 f.). In these instances, they appropriate the norms of customer orientation but redefine them in a sense of increased professionalism and authenticity in order to resist rationalisation. For frontline workers then the multiplication of recognition relations and dialectics within work has an enabling side. All in all, it appears that workers reconstruct recognition relations in a way which lets them mobilise more discretion and individuality than the organisation and technical layout of the work would suggest.

Not surprisingly, control and performance evaluation are particularly sensitive issues in terms of recognition. There has been some controversy over the consensual or conflictory character of control and coaching in call centre research (Frenkel et al. 1999; Taylor/Bain 2001), and indeed the findings are puzzling. Frenkel et al. (1999: 139 ff.) report that even though measurements of call-handling times, service levels etc. are detailed, actual supervision mostly occurred in a "facilitative" manner which stressed coaching and improvement and was

perceived in these terms by agents as well. In our study, we find evidence for the same pattern: Bank 1[7] is currently implementing a coaching system which simultaneously evaluates and trains workers against detailed quality criteria. Each agent is to be coached ten times per year with each session lasting 50 minutes and feedback given immediately. The results will be part of the pay-relevant performance appraisal as well. A quality manager reckons that employees will approve of the coaching system:

> "They say: I'm good. I want to have that put down in writing. People, listen in, I want to show that I'm good" (Bank 1, QualM: 11).

Control through coaching is not just seen as a chance for organisational recognition of their competence. It recognises people as self-developing subjects as well and thus draws on the dynamics of identity formation (cf. Grey 1994; Newton 1996). It also draws on a willingness to consider exams and evaluations as an integral part of skill formation and of personal development, which is shaped in university socialisation. The recruitment of students thus enables the organisation to mobilise the norms and disposition of (future) highly-skilled and professional workers in a less than professional field. Possibly, their expected conformity to the organisation's evaluation criteria is based on an anticipation of managerial roles. At any rate it is supported by the organisation's own focus on the quality of output and service as opposed to quantity (cf. Taylor/Bain 2001).

Yet there is evidence that agents' perspectives are more ambiguous (Korczynski et al. 2000; Taylor/Bain 2001). Performance criteria are seen as carrying misrecognition when they are contradictory or when agents perceive them to hinder their competent performance of their jobs. Hypothetically, agents accept or even embrace such performance criteria which are in line with their own perception of what is relevant in their jobs and with their own job-related identities. Changes in evaluation, for instance the introduction of "harder" measurements or a shift to sales targets then may upset relations of recognition.

Thus the recognition of service quality is already ambiguous in itself. It may involve both workers and management in a quality coalition, and recognition needs and wishes may indeed be mobilised to involve subjects into producing conformity to a high standard. However, recognition creates its own dynamism. If workers are recognised as competent, empathetic and self-developing individuals, an organisation's infringements of their discretion, a stepping up of sales targets or a tightening of control may all be experienced as disregarding existing 'moral economies' – all the more since the demands of the job are contradictory already.

Beyond the evaluation of service, we also find instances of recognition of authorship. This may sound surprising in a field of (up to a point) standardised and standardising service work. Yet coaching is supposed to tackle exactly the tendency towards routinisation which both management and agents see as a problem:

> "When someone listens in consciously, you get some feedback on what wording you use. It's really, hmm, am I really saying that? I don't believe it! So then you really become aware and control yourself more in the next call." (Agent C, Outbound Bank 1)

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[7] This banking call centre belongs to a large German bank and handles telephone requests for the banks' branches, operates a support hotline for online banking, and offers direct brokerage services by phone. It has more than 300 agents, three fifths of whom work part-time. Of the part-time agents, 40% are students or graduates. Here, interviews with management, agents and supervisors and a survey of agents' work demography and experience have been conducted (cf. Arzbächer/Holtgrewe/Kerst 2000).

Because continuous attention in the face of routinised work is a generally held norm, official coaching is complemented by informal discussion. Here, authorship may be explicitly recognised:

> "There is a lot happening among the agents as well. People say, hey, I just heard that sentence you used. How are you getting on with that? That sounds great, can I use that, too?
>
> Interviewer: That's very polite, asking for permission, isn't it?
>
> There is a lot going on with publication over e-mail as well. Many people publish things that worked well for them. Share their experience. There are scripts as well. Some go to the trouble to translate them into English or French if they are good at that or have just had a customer in that language." (Bank 1, supervisor outbound)

Even though personal fame can hardly be achieved through call centre work, in an ongoing struggle against routinisation and mechanical conformity to expectations, agents can be said to borrow modes of recognition found in such workplaces and social spheres which recognise creativity more explicitly. The collective and informal monitoring and development of quality reminds us of the editing practices in other occupations working with language such as journalism. Here as well, authorship is addressed while authors are routinely expected to accept intervention and correction of their texts in the name of product quality. In the case of a high percentage of students working part-time, such transfers of practices occur directly: Students bring the normatively engrained habits of academic quotation and thus, professional recognition to an – at first sight – unlikely workplace. And they provide both management and themselves with the spare motivation and skills to reconstruct their jobs as knowledge work.

3.2 From service to ownership

Beyond the maintenance of quality, struggles within multiple relations of recognition may even transcend the arena of conflict, control and consensus in which they started.[8] This will be explored through the events around the most intense call centre labour conflict in Germany so far which happened around the closure and centralisation of Citibank's call centre operations in Duisburg in late 1998 and early 1999.[9]

Citibank, now Citigroup's private banking operations, specialise in providing a standardised banking service worldwide, in self-service banking and also in tying banking to other services such as hire-purchase arrangements and loans arranged through retailers. Citibank pioneered telephone banking in Germany, opening the Bochum call centre in 1989 and another one in Duisburg. The Ruhr area was specifically chosen for its high density of universities, and students were recruited as a highly educated, yet cheap and by definition temporary workforce. Here, students' multiple commitments came into effect in a different way: Inadvertently, the particular students who were recruited had experience in student activism, left-wing politics and a diversity of artistic and political projects which at the time were still a

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8 Indeed, in labour conflicts beyond the everyday this is essential. Organising labour actually means shaping a new community or organisation in which feelings of disrespect are made sense of, in which the situation is defined and claims are collectively established.

9 This case study is based on interviews by the author and Lars Gundtoft with participants in the struggle, on observations of solidarity meetings and on an analysis of the press and the extensive internet documentation of the events. This is to be found under http://www.labournet.de/call-op/home.html and http://www.citi-critic.de, though the material is chiefly in German.

presence at Bochum university. Though the call centre was established outside the collective agreements in the banking sector, soon a works council was demanded and established.[10]
Beside the material gains obtained through the works council, activists reflected and indeed stylised their activities in political and cultural terms as well (Girndt 1997; Oberlindober 1999). They presented themselves as the "Gallic village" of the Asterix cartoons, as one focus at the forefront of resistance to global McDonaldisation and symbolically drew on a mixture of popular culture and intellectual analysis ranging from the "X Files" to Foucault (Girndt 1997; Oberlindober 1999). This self-positioning of the activists mirrors and reverses Citibank's global orientation and both extends and transforms the organisation's ascription of universal responsibility. Contrary to their world-view of global companies promoting global subservience, agents claimed a valuation of frontline service professionalism against the organisational disrespect for it.
Yet in 1998 the closure of the Bochum call centre was announced for 1999. Citibank planned to centralise all its call centre operations in a new subsidiary where previous site-specific agreements would be cancelled and standards lowered. Both in Bochum and Duisburg (where previously the call centre service to retailers was based) a campaign was launched which culminated in a strike. On December 8th 1999, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. call centre services were unavailable. In addition, a campaign network calls for customers to boycott Citibank (http://www.citi-critic.de).
While the strike predictably resulted in agreements on severance pay for the terminated workers, the participants in the strike took the appropriation of service professionalism and customer orientation one step further: They drew on their experience both of work at Citibank and of the protest and on the distinctive and avantgardist reputation they had gained within their trade union to invest their severance pay in the start-up of an enterprise of their own.[11] This start-up business, Tekomedia (http://www.tekomedia.de) specialises in information, communication, campaigning and publicity services to non-profit and public sector organisations and employs 21 people (as of December 2000). The company intends to transform itself into a "Center for Intelligent Services" which offers consultancy to other workers' initiatives against plant closures, promotes the internationalisation of unions and workers' initiatives, offers high-quality service training and presents a model for a learning, non-hierarchical self-organisation. While its ambitious self-presentation should be taken with a grain of salt, it further changes relations and arenas of recognition: Tekomedia converts political and organisational reputation into entrepreneurship, their supporters into potential customers and/or collaborators, symbolic into material ownership and transformation of the labour process.
The struggle against the closure of Citibank call centres has some fairly traditional and some fairly postmodern elements. Plant closures present a very basic misrecognition of work. In the protests, the quality of work is proclaimed in the sense of producers' pride, the ties of the plant to the community around it are politicised, and even customers are mobilised.[12] Traditionally, this producers' pride used to be firmly tied to claims to recognition of the hard, masculine work which legitimises a sense of belonging to a community, of roots. What distinguishes our case is that the protest has a more fluid and transformative character. It is

10 In Germany, the system of industrial relations works on two levels (cf. Weiss 1992; Visser/van Ruysseveldt 1996): On the plant/company level (above five employees), both unionised and non-unionised workers are represented by an elected works council with extensive information, consultation and co-determination rights. Collective agreements over wage rates and working conditions for industries and regions are negotiated by the union(s) and respective employers' association. They may and increasingly do contain frameworks for company-specific regulations.

11 The financing of the company was carried by some 100 ex-Citibank workers investing at least DM 1.500 each.

12 Such protests have a specific regional tradition in the Ruhr area especially around the steel industry (Krupp at Duisburg-Rheinhausen in 1987/88 is memorable, cf. Jäger 1994).

not an established community that is threatened by and defended against a company's flexibilisation strategies but explicitly a self-styled network of people with multiple options which turns out to be mobile enough to shift the relevant arenas of recognition. Belonging is thus "put on the move" (Munro 1998) in a resistant sense, and so is success. Communities are continuously opened up and their boundaries reflected and transcended. Not the logic of the market itself, but the struggle to *unfold* the intersubjective possibilities of customer orientation and service quality is indeed opening up new possibilities of both action and reflection.

4.3 Transforming authorship: open source/free software

While the Citibank call centre case shows the creative transformation of arenas and dimensions of recognition through a labour struggle and beyond, the second example addresses the transformation of the institutions of innovation beyond the sphere of paid work (in more detail see Holtgrewe 2001). Open source or free software[13] is developed in non-commercial projects in which a number of developers (ranging from a couple of dozen to hundreds or even thousands of people) create, test, improve, document and maintain computer programmes and modules of programmes.[14] Such developments are distributed and shared on the Internet so that spatially and temporally distributed work is possible. Projects describe themselves as decidedly open: Everybody who is able to deliver a qualified contribution is invited to do so. (The question of course is what contributions are considered qualified.) Discussion takes place over public mailing lists. Yet the decision which contributions will be included in new distributions is mostly taken by a core group of maintainers.

The most well-known example of open source software is the operating system Linux which in the last few years has spread to personal computers as well. But also whoever uses the WWW or e-mail uses free software on which – backstage for the layperson – web- and mailservers are running. Open source/free software does not just constitute a departure from the established worlds of commercial software development. It continues traditions of public goods and of the open academic circulation of knowledge which were present in the early development of the Internet before software even became a separate commodity (Grassmuck 2000).

This means fluid boundaries between users and developers:

> „Users are wonderful things to have, and not just because they demonstrate that you're serving a need, that you've done something right. Properly cultivated, they can become co-developers" (Raymond 1998: 5).

With larger projects, usually informal divisions of labour form. The founder keeps a central position and core teams and responsible maintainers of parts of the project emerge who select contributions and decide on new versions. There is some evidence that contributions to open source projects are more unequally distributed than the normative idea of a "bazaar" of free and open exchange (Raymond 1998) suggests: Among the 13.000 authors of the Linux kernel

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13 Literally, open source refers to the accessibility of a programme's source code. Programmes generally are written in higher programming languages and then translated into machine language (compiled). The sourcecode is thus required if you want to study the working of the programme, to improve or develop it further. With proprietary software, typically the compiled version is sold. This runs on the computer but does not contain the information what the programmer has written. (Exceptions are commmercial programme libraries which are used in software development.) Reconstructing the source code from there (reverse engineering) is extremely difficult and forbidden by most software licences because the producer retains the right to develop the programme.

14 Open source is chiefly developed in the Unix world. Unix-based operating systems as opposed to Microsoft Windows are modular, i. e. they provide many tools to build a working environment. This architecture makes it possible to work on programmes and parts of programmes separately (Moon/Sproul 2000).

mailing list, who wrote 175.000 contributions in between July 1995 and April 2000, 2% had written more than half of the contributions (Moon/Sproull 2000; cf. Ghosh/Prakash 2000).

The fascination of non-commercial, co-operative and competitive technological innovation has lead observers and activists themselves to wonder what motivates such commitment in a field which offers attractive work opportunities in the commercial world as well. According to the classical rational choice calculation by Olson (1968), a collective good is the less likely to be produced, the easier it is to free-ride without contributing. In order to motivate actors to contribute, selective incentives are necessary which are available to contributors only. Marwell/Oliver (1993) have argued that this obstacle can be overcome, if actors are informed about others' contributions and if particular actors are sufficiently interested in the collective good to contribute a critical amount which then motivates others to further contributions (cf. Kuwabara 2000). In fields of technological or cultural innovation, then, the institution of authorship can give an impulse to the production of public goods. Here the ascription of authorship offers specific chances of recognition and reputation for the initiators.

The open source theorist Eric Raymond (1998; 1999a) has argued that open source development indeed functions according to the rules of a gift economy in which gifts are exchanged for reputation. The more or less implicit rules of developers' communities then make sure that reputation is distributed fairly and that information on reputation can circulate freely. Structures of leadership and authority follow this pattern: Reputation is gained if and when recognised authorities (key developers and maintainers) evaluate voluntary contributions, and include them in new distributions. This authority (based on early authorship) is however tied to other, quasi-professional norms which guarantee that the market of reputation does not circle around ego but around the product, the functioning and good programmes.

Bezroukov (1999 a and b), comparing open source development to other reputation economies such as science, points out the possible and frequently observed disfunctionalities. Their focus on authorities encourages incrementalism and conservatism. Decisions may be intransparent or arbitrary, and the central figures may end up with overloads of demands. The assignment of reputation to persons may render projects blind to just such structural problems and crises – lately, delays in Linux development have frequently been discussed in terms of the performance and general qualities of founder/key decider Linus Torvalds (cf. the material presented in Bezroukov 2000).

While the concept of gift and reputation economies does indeed help to explain some of the peculiarities of "new" economies, it may be too instrumental still – even when realising that reputation cannot be achieved through instrumental calculation. It tends to ignore the specific intrinsic values and use-values of creative activity. The Indian economist Rishab Aiyer Ghosh (1998) has suggested the model of a "cooking pot economy". This means a structure of social exchange in which limited contributions give the contributors access to a wide variety of contributions with an emergent, collective use-value which is larger than just the addition of single contributions. The use of this variety, the chances for action, learning and enjoyment is the specific incentive of taking part in such exchanges. If the distribution cost of cooking pot ingredients is negligible, free-riding is not a problem, but free-riders miss out on the main value of the project.

While part of the open source projects are oriented towards technological excellence, there is an element of a social movement or a cultural avantgarde as well: "Activists" – the chief theorist and activist is Richard M. Stallman – focus on social transformation in the direction of freedom, learning, the use-value and intelligent and co-operative use of products. Institutions, especially institutions of intellectual property hindering creative appropriation and development are thus challenged and transformed. The social innovation which focuses this ambition to act as a social movement as well is the so called copyleft (cf. www.gnu.org). This is the legal construction of a licence, the General Public License (= GPL) under which

much open source software, also Linux, is distributed freely. It does not just rule that products are free but allows free distribution under the condition that further developments and applications are put under the same licence. The point of the GPL thus is its "infective" character. It is a tricky construction which uses the legal instruments of copyright to subvert it. Copyright generally allows its holder to determine the conditions of the distribution and – up to a point – use of their creative products. Copyleft ("All rights reversed") ties a creative posterity to the conditions of open use – an attempt to tie oneself and others to freedom and variety.

Although this very hacker-like paradoxical construction is amazing legally and socially, it has not become the standard for open source communities. It has lead to a proliferation of diverse licences developed by different influential projects. F. i. the BSDs (other Unix-based operating systems), the web server Apache and the programming language Perl have all created their own licences which limit the infectiveness of the GPL (for an overview see Perens 1999). The reasons for that are not just authors' claims to intellectual property rights. The demands of the GPL are a problem as soon as open source development touches on co-operation with economic actors. Such co-operations are unavoidable when interfaces with commercial programmes are built or hardware drivers are written. This requires information from producers, and even if they are interested in giving it, they are unlikely to give up their own property rights.

This suggests that open source/free software is not and cannot be incompatible with business interests. Rather, there are complex arrangements and negotiations between economic and non-profit actors. It is quite legitimate to make money out of services around open source/free software. F. i. in the 1990s several companies have been established who sell Linux distributions (Red Hat, Suse and others), and/or offer software support, training and consulting services (Cygnus Solutions), or publish handbooks and magazines (O'Reilly). These companies hired developers who went on working on free projects. They thus give up conventionally exclusive property rights to software developments – in the interests of maintaining the public good which is the basis for their business, of making distributions more attractive, but also of keeping up a fair social exchange with the non-profit community.[15]

This does not mean that relations between these spheres are always harmonious, and where Linux is concerned, it seems that tensions increase. Its diffusion to lay users, both consumers and companies, leads to increased demands of users for solutions which compete with commercial software. This in turn increases pressure on the non-profit communities. Recently in 2000, Linux distribution companies and hardware manufacturers have jointly invested in an Open Source Development Lab. On the other hand, it has been suggested to institutionalise the non-profit side in a similar way, building on existing foundations (Bezroukov 2000; Browne 2000) and/or involving the public sector (FifF-Information 1999; Grassmuck 2000). Commercialisation and attention to the specific moral economies of software as a public good thus are so far still co-existing.

Even though the diffusion of the GPL, which challenges the institutions of intellectual property and ties authorship to the use-value of projects exclusively, is limited, it does not appear to be just another utopian idea which has failed in the face of reality. The social innovation of the GPL together with the success of open source as a development model for high quality software have challenged standards and institutions of intellectual property and set a normative maximal standard. It mobilises social imagination and connects it with technological possibilities.

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15 F. i. the „Center for the Public Domain" (www.centerpd.org) a foundation providing funding and information to diverse free software groups brings together academic experts, activists and entrepreneurs (and people who are all these things).

5. Discussion and conclusion

We have thus seen that even in routinised knowledge work, the recognition of service quality is not just an issue for workplace design and occupational training but also for work-related identities and struggles. Workers do not easily submit themselves to management's definition of service. Quality, creativity and customer orientation become contested terrains instead of mere channels for managerial hegemony. Even the recognition of authorship, by workers who through the education system and through mass culture can imagine themselves and indeed can *be* authors in other spheres of their lives (Wagner 2000), infiltrates working life. This certainly points in the direction of job enrichment, but workers' claims to recognition of their competence and creativity do not necessarily stop there. The Citibank case has shown that they may even lead to people collectively moving into different fields of struggle and work, where increased determination over the quality of work and "ownership" of expertise can be achieved.

Open source software development has its roots outside of the commercial sphere. Academic and basic research, alternative and hacker culture (in the sense of libertarian computer enthusiasts, not criminals) and also the professional engineering traditions of public infrastructures (f. i. Mead 1934/1973; Werle 2000) form the normative and practical traditions of creativity and its recognition – and its success demonstrates that they are not absorbed in entrepreneurial innovation.

It thus embodies a way of thinking about the sustainability of chances and spaces for creative action and about the democratisation of technological and also cultural development. However, I do not agree with the programmatic view that open source can take the place of what used to be socialism etc., as an all-embracing model of a mode of production (f. i. Meretz 1999; www.oekonux.de). Yet especially through its relations and tensions with the disparate logics of social movements and markets, it opens up the perspectives on social alternatives.

In both cases, it is perspectives on use-value which come into play and become the bases for claims to recognition. Service workers come to empathise with customers' needs and problems, wanting themselves and their employers to offer satisfactory and professional solutions to them. Such an understanding of their work leads them to claim and honour recognition for their everyday creative action in terms of authorship. Open source developing communities take this further and demand to keep software development a gift and a co-operative self-expression instead of a commodity - notably enabled by and concerned with the care for public goods around which commercial services may be developed. This transcends authorship in the conventional sense of exclusive ownership. Authors in the sense of the copyleft use their rights to retain for posterity the right to freely improve and circulate their production.

In this way, both service and authorship, as they are addressed in the fields of action considered here, actualise claims to human self-actualisation and co-operation, to satisfying others' needs and doing great things. They translate the recognition issues of empathy and distinction for knowledge societies which may be in love with technology but will not restrict themselves to becoming "new economies".

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